United Nations A/71/87-E/2016/67

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 May 2016

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Item 69 (b) of the preliminary list*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Economic and Social Council
2016 session
24 July 2015-27 July 2016
Agenda item 14
Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The report, submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 70/108, contains an assessment of the assistance received by the Palestinian people and an assessment of needs still unmet, together with proposals for responding to them. It provides a description of efforts made by the United Nations, in cooperation with the Government of the State of Palestine, donors and civil society, to support the Palestinian population and institutions.

During the reporting period (April 2015-March 2016), negative trends on the ground persisted, resulting in a two-State solution becoming even more distant. The United Nations continued its efforts to respond to humanitarian and development challenges in the context of occupation, while focusing in particular on supporting the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza after the conflict with Israel in the middle of 2014.

The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan, requiring $571 million, outlines the programming to address urgent humanitarian needs throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. In addition, at the request of the Government of the State of Palestine, the United Nations, together with the European Union and the World Bank, prepared a detailed needs assessment and recovery framework for Gaza, to inform the recovery and reconstruction work, and estimated the effects of the escalation of hostilities in Gaza in 2014 at $1.4 billion in damages and $1.7 billion in economic losses.

* A/71/50.

16-07773 (E) 200516

Please recycle

The Government continued to implement the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty. In support of those efforts, the United Nations continued to implement the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2014-2017. The financial resources required for the assistance provided through the Framework are some $2.15 billion.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 70/108, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its seventy-first session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution, containing an assessment of the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people and an assessment of the needs still unmet, with specific proposals for responding effectively to them. Also included is a summary of key political developments and challenges relevant to the reporting period, as the international community continued to work to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, especially with regard to the recovery and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, and to support the State-building efforts of the Government of the State of Palestine. The reporting period is from April 2015 to March 2016.

2. Information on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people is provided in several reports prepared by other United Nations agencies and submitted to various United Nations bodies, in particular: the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (to be issued); the annual report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/70/13); and the report of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in September 2015.

3. The humanitarian, economic and development needs of the Palestinian people are reflected in several complementary strategic and resource mobilization documents. The 2016 Strategic Response Plan seeks $517 million to address the most urgent humanitarian needs, including by enhancing the protective environment and improving access to essential services for the most vulnerable groups throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2014-2017 presents the United Nations strategic response to the Palestinian development priorities contained in the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty.

4. Throughout the year, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process continued its efforts to support the peace process and to promote coordination among the Government of the State of Palestine, the United Nations, the international community and the Government of Israel. The Office also continued to document the economic and social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory and to develop policies and programmes to improve them.

II. Overview of the current situation

A. Political context

5. The reporting period was characterized by continued negative trends on the ground, including ongoing settlement activity, high rates of demolitions of Palestinian structures and a lack of genuine Palestinian unity, all imperilling the viability of a two-State solution. The continued lack of a political horizon for a two-

State solution contributed to the growing frustration among Palestinians, especially young people, fuelling a wave of violence by mainly non-affiliated individuals that began in October 2015.

6. The United Nations continued to engage, including through the Quartet, with Israeli and Palestinian leaders and with key Arab States to explore avenues to preserve the two-State solution and create the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations. In September 2015, the Quartet called upon the parties to take significant steps on the ground, consistent with prior agreements, to strengthen Palestinian institutions, security and economic prospects, while respecting Israeli security needs.

7. The new Israeli Government, headed by the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, took office on 14 May 2015 and continued settlement activities in the occupied West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, albeit at a slower overall pace for settlement planning and tendering than in the previous reporting period. The beginning of 2016 witnessed a sharp increase in demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank. Those actions had a particular impact on Palestinian Bedouin and herding communities in Area C. The Israeli authorities also reaffirmed their intention to complete the so-called legalization process of several settlement outposts and, on 10 March 2016, classified 2,340 dunums (578 acres) of land in the Jordan Valley as "State land".

8. On 31 July 2015, an arson attack by Jewish extremists in the village of Duma, in the occupied West Bank, killed three of the four members of the Dawabsheh family. Holding Israel "fully responsible", the Palestine Liberation Organization linked the attack to what it claimed was a decades-long Israeli policy of impunity towards settler attacks. The Government of Israel issued several indictments on 3 January 2016 and two Israelis were later convicted.

9. Against a backdrop of other drivers, tensions around holy sites in Jerusalem in September 2015 sparked an escalation of violence throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, beginning in October 2015. A series of stabbings, shootings and vehicle attacks by Palestinians against Israelis in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, claimed the lives of 30 Israelis and 136 Palestinians, many of the latter being reported as perpetrators. There was also an upsurge in clashes with Israeli forces beginning in October, with 59 Palestinians killed or later succumbing to wounds sustained. The pressure to suspend security coordination notwithstanding, the Israeli and Palestinian security forces continued to coordinate throughout the reporting period. The United Nations called for thorough investigations in cases in which there were serious questions regarding the appropriate use of force by the Israeli security forces, and repeatedly called for community, religious and political leaders on both sides to curb incitement to violence.

10. The United States of America facilitated understandings on 24 October 2015 between Israel and Jordan on upholding the status quo at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, which helped to ease tensions at that flashpoint site. Earlier, on 5 October, the Prime Minister of Israel had prohibited members of the Knesset and ministers from visiting the site in an effort to lower tensions. Nevertheless, renewed provocations by extremist elements on either side, in particular during religious holidays, cannot be ruled out and could reignite tensions. During the holy month of Ramadan, Israel lifted

age restrictions for access to the compound, which saw some 3 million visits by Muslim worshippers from the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem.

11. The ceasefire that brought an end to the hostilities between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza on 26 August 2014 held, but remained fragile. Demonstrations along the security fence between Gaza and Israel continued and incidents of cross-border shootings by the Israeli security forces increased in the second half of 2015. On 22 June 2015, the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1 released its report on the conflict of 2014, including recommendations aimed at promoting accountability by all sides.

12. The reconstruction process in Gaza continued, including the rebuilding of homes completely destroyed in the hostilities of 2014. To date, more than 100,000 people whose homes were partially damaged have gained access to material to repair them, while some 2,000 households have gained access to material to rebuild their fully demolished homes. More than 90 per cent of damaged and demolished schools and hospitals have been repaired. The United Nations continued to assert that the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism was a temporary arrangement and to call for a lifting of all closures of Gaza within the framework of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

13. On the recovery of the economy in Gaza, the provision of basic services and the reconstruction process continued to be constrained by Israeli closure policies, the slow disbursement of pledged funds and the persistent intra-Palestinian divide. The Government of national consensus formed in June 2014 remained unable to assume its governance and security functions in Gaza, including control over the crossings. Reconciliation discussions between Fatah and Hamas, in addition to other Palestinian factions, in July 2015 and most recently in March 2016, on forming a national unity Government and holding long-overdue elections, have yet to bear fruit.

14. The continued destruction of illegal tunnels from Gaza and the closure of the Rafah crossing, which was open for only 30 days during the reporting period, further aggravated the difficult humanitarian situation in the Strip. Those factors significantly increased the financial pressure on the de facto authorities in Gaza, who increased taxes, fuelling rare public anger, including demonstrations and protests. Adding to that pressure were challenges to the political authority of Hamas from Salafi-jihadist groups, resulting in occasional crackdowns and arrests.

B. Humanitarian and socioeconomic context

Economic and fiscal developments

15. The economic conditions were characterized by a subdued recovery from the conflict. Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 3.5 per cent over 2014 levels, driven by growth of 2.5 per cent in the West Bank and 6.8 per cent in Gaza. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates that under a baseline scenario GDP will grow by about 3.8 per cent in 2016, while the International Monetary Fund projects 3.5 per cent. Such growth will be insufficient to significantly increase per capita income or reduce unemployment.

16. A high degree of political uncertainty, together with the withholding of clearance revenue by Israel in the earlier part of 2015, contributed to the muted growth. While the withheld revenue was released in the second quarter of 2015, the multiplier effect of delayed wage payments and public spending cuts dampened growth.

17. The unemployment rate declined slightly, but continued to remain alarmingly high. At the end of 2015, 25.8 per cent of the labour force was unemployed, compared with 26.5 per cent the year before. The gains were driven primarily by a decrease in the male unemployment rate in Gaza (from 23.8 to 22.3 per cent), while that for women increased (from 36.5 to 39.7 per cent). The unemployment rates continued to be significantly higher in Gaza (38.4 per cent) than in the West Bank (18.7 per cent).

Humanitarian developments

18. During the reporting period, 218 Palestinians, including 47 children, were killed in direct conflict incidents (the vast majority by Israeli security forces) throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, and more than 16,000, including 2,800 children, were injured. A total of 127 Palestinian suspected perpetrators, including 30 children, and 28 Israelis[1] were killed in the context of an increase in stabbing, ramming and shooting attacks and alleged attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians and members of the security forces, both in the West Bank and in Israel. In the West Bank, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded the highest number of Palestinian casualties since 2005, when it began documenting incidents. In Gaza, 4 Palestinians, including 3 children, were reportedly killed and at least 11 injured in Israeli air strikes, conducted in retaliation for intermittent rocket fire by Palestinian militant groups towards Israel as the ceasefire remained fragile. A total of 23 Palestinians, including a child, were killed and another 1,437, including 137 children, were injured by Israeli forces in protests along the Gaza perimeter fence, mostly in October 2015.

19. The targeting of Israeli civilians by Palestinians and the possible use of excessive force by the Israeli security forces in response to the attacks, in addition to during protests and clashes, were among the protection concerns during the reporting period. Those concerns were compounded by the perceived lack of accountability and effective remedy for the loss of civilian life and property.

20. In the West Bank, there was an increase of 32.6 per cent in the number of Palestinian homes and livelihood-related structures destroyed, dismantled or confiscated by the Israeli authorities, compared with the previous 12 months (from 646 to 857), displacing 1,125 persons, half of them children. February 2016 stood out as having the highest number of structures demolished in a single month (237) since 2009, when the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began systematically documenting demolitions. Of the structures affected during the reporting period, 31 were demolished or sealed on punitive grounds. That practice targeted the family homes of perpetrators, or alleged perpetrators, of attacks against Israelis.

[1] Including four Israelis killed in two incidents by two Israeli Arabs; the two perpetrators were also killed.

27. The United Nations implemented the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, a strategic planning framework that guides United Nations development programming for 2014-2017 and is aligned with the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty. It places the Palestinian people at the centre of development programming with the aim of enhancing human security in a context of occupation.

A. Human and social development

28. The United Nations coordinated and delivered humanitarian assistance, including food assistance, to more than 1 million people, water and sanitation assistance to in excess of 1.5 million people and health and nutrition services to some 2.5 million people in the occupied Palestinian territory.

29. United Nations development programming focused on capacity development, infrastructure and the provision of direct assistance and basic services. The work is, as outlined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, centred on six strategic areas: economic empowerment, livelihoods, decent work and food security; governance, rule of law, justice and human rights; education; health care; social protection; and urban development, natural resource management and infrastructure. The financial resources required for the assistance are estimated at $2.15 billion, of which $1.3 billion had been mobilized at the time of writing.

30. Below are illustrative examples of the assistance provided by the United Nations.

Education

31. UNRWA provided free primary education to some 300,000 children enrolled in 353 elementary and preparatory schools throughout Gaza and the West Bank. In Gaza, eight new UNRWA schools were built to address population growth and reduce the number of schools operating on double and triple shifts. Currently, 75.5 per cent of the schools there use such a system, resulting in refugee children having fewer opportunities to engage in recreational and creative pursuits.

32. In the West Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) improved access to education through the rehabilitation of 15 school units in two schools that benefited 736 pupils and a kindergarten that benefited 150 children with disabilities, as well as through the provision of a mobile education resource centre that benefited 1,436 pupils in marginalized communities. In Gaza, UNDP rehabilitated five private schools, two government schools, five training centres and three higher education institutes.

33. United Nations agencies continued to meet capacity-building needs in the areas of inclusive, child-friendly education and early childhood development. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization supported the inclusive education programme, which promotes a human rights-based approach to education. In Gaza, 12 head teachers and teachers from six UNRWA schools and 148 head teachers and teachers from all 96 UNRWA schools in the West Bank benefited from training on inclusive education. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the promotion of active learning teaching methodologies for teachers and supervisors, as well as in the

41. In the West Bank, UNDP improved, constructed or rehabilitated 141 water cisterns and water networks and installed and rehabilitated water storage and distribution units. UNICEF also supported the rehabilitation and construction of water networks, improving access to safe water for 31,000 people.

Employment

42. United Nations agencies continued to support income-generating and self-employment opportunities for vulnerable Palestinians. UNDP supported 2,300 families in Gaza and the West Bank with income-generating and employment-generating activities in small and microenterprise development. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), through 62 women's centres, focused on providing job opportunities in food processing and marketing. The programme directly benefited 773 women workers, while more than 43,400 women benefited indirectly from business training at the centres. A total of 41 of the centres have reached financial sustainability. The activity also benefited 335 schools and more than 108,000 schoolchildren, who received healthy and affordable snacks made by women from the community-based centres. UN-Women also supported 45 women-owned or women-run small, medium-sized and microenterprises through specialized capacity-building as part of a continuous support cycle to integrate women into the local, regional and international markets and ensure their transition from the informal sector to the formal sector. That support benefited 502 workers and family supporters, 93.4 per cent of whom were women. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported 27 cooperatives, including 6 women's cooperatives, through activities aimed at increasing productivity and access to local and international markets, thereby helping 1,318 people to achieve improved economic conditions through training to strengthen the production and marketability of their products. FAO, UN-Women and the International Trade Centre, through a joint programme, established a full-service hub to provide guidance to women-owned or women-run small, medium-sized and microenterprises and cooperatives throughout the business development cycle, from capacity-building to enhancing their sales in the local, regional and international markets.

43. The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched a Gaza recovery programme to support those communities most affected by the conflict, including vulnerable families and individuals having lost productive assets or income sources. In partnership with the Gaza Chamber of Commerce, ILO provided 50 small, medium-sized and microenterprise carpenters with small grants, at a total value of $90,000, for asset replacement services, coupled with a paid three-month job placement scheme for carpenters. It also supported the fishers' union with improved curricula, training on technical skills, job placements, capacity-building on occupational safety and health and direct support to fishers. Moreover, in partnership with local non-governmental organizations, 50 women sheep breeders were trained in the management of sheep farms, life skills, financial and marketing literacy, and cooperative and business group formation.

44. In cooperation with the Islamic University of Gaza, ILO supported the introduction of apprenticeships, the development and improvement of curricula and the development of technical and business management skills for students, including women architects and persons with disabilities. Its work will enable graduates to

meet the needs of the private sector in the reconstruction process and develop livelihoods in agriculture and craftwork.

45. In the West Bank, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in partnership with the municipality of Hebron and the Ministry of Social Affairs, finalized the establishment of a technical and vocational training centre to empower 100 underprivileged women and their families and improve their living standards through the provision of vocational training, urban entrepreneurship development and economic training programmes and initiatives.

Targeted social protection

46. In Gaza, UNRWA distributed 393,664 food parcels to 20,453 Palestine refugee households through the social safety net programme. It also distributed 144,518 food parcels and $1.4 million in supplementary cash assistance to 8,388 Palestine refugee households in the West Bank. The World Food Programme (WFP) supported the social safety net programme, through which it provided more than 195,000 people with food and cash-based transfers.

Culture

47. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization supported the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in Gaza and the West Bank through the rehabilitation of 10 historic sites that facilitated accessibility to cultural heritage assets, contributed to the socioeconomic development of targeted communities and helped to develop the technical capacity of local architects, engineers and young professionals in the field of cultural heritage preservation.

48. UNDP supported the cultural tourism industry through the upgrading of the Khan al-Wakalah historical compound in Nablus, which serves as a model for advancing public-private partnerships in the tourism industry at the national level.

Food security and agriculture

49. FAO improved water availability and management to enhance agricultural production. More than 1,215 farmers benefited from improved access to and management of water through the rehabilitation and enhancement of wells and irrigation systems and the introduction of improved water demand management practices. Consequently, 4,860 dunums of land are now irrigated efficiently.

50. Through the agriculture sector revitalization activities of FAO, 1,318 farmers benefited from intensive training on pest management and global good agricultural practices certification. In addition, 283 members of six women's cooperatives were trained in agricultural production techniques. FAO also supported 317 households to construct small-scale home-based food production units, including vegetable and animal units, providing them with an immediate source of food and a diversified income.

51. In the West Bank, UNDP increased the number of agricultural holdings through the reclamation of at least 1,775 dunums of agricultural land and the construction and rehabilitation of agricultural roads and service roads.

Human rights, women, children and young people

52. Through the UNDP and UN-Women joint rule of law programme, 24,891 individuals, 51 per cent of whom were women, in Gaza and the West Bank benefited from free legal aid provided by civil society organizations. In addition, specialized legal aid services were provided to juveniles in 657 cases through support to the Legal Unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

53. United Nations agencies continued to support the special needs of women by tackling gender-based violence. UNFPA focused on the integration of gender-based violence services into the national health system. Through that support, 800 health providers were trained and gained new knowledge and skills with regard to the detection, treatment and referral of gender-based violence cases and became able to respond to cases in primary health-care centres and emergency rooms. More than 3,200 survivors were referred to and provided with legal and psychosocial services by United Nations agencies and partners in Gaza and the West Bank. UNFPA also established a women-friendly safe space in the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, where vulnerable women benefit from access to services. UNRWA and UN-Women led wide-reaching activities in Gaza and the West Bank to raise awareness of gender-based violence. UN-Women also provided capacity-building for the 15 special public prosecutors specialized in prosecuting violence against women.

54. United Nations agencies supported youth empowerment programmes, equipping young people with entrepreneurial and civic engagement skills, reaching more than 6,000 people throughout Gaza and the West Bank. UNICEF worked with the Higher Council for Youth and Sports to build the capacity of teachers and trainers to implement skills development programmes for young people.

55. In response to the escalation in violence throughout the West Bank in the fourth quarter of 2015, UNRWA increased programme interventions to mitigate the effects of the current situation on children. Its initiatives included recreational activities, group and individual counselling reaching more than 50,000 pupils and sessions for 400 parents on preventing risky behaviour.

56. UNICEF led the inter-agency working group for the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009). The working group continued to document grave violations and informed programmatic action and advocacy.

Environment, housing and urban development

57. UN-Habitat concluded the implementation of two spatial planning programmes in Area C of the West Bank, including the preparation of 34 detailed local outline plans aimed at reducing the displacement pressure on more than 35,000 Palestinians. It also provided urban planning support to Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem with the aim of securing specific development and building opportunities and rights in order to facilitate the immediate improvement of living conditions and ease displacement pressure. The programme helped to freeze demolition orders for more than 750 buildings and provided new public space in the Sur Bahir neighbourhood.

58. In the West Bank, UNDP completed nine road infrastructure projects, contributing to improved living conditions for at least 40,000 Palestinians, and

created access to electricity for 979 families through the provision of solar units. In addition, it rehabilitated more than 250 homes and supported housing cooperatives, providing increased access to proper and affordable housing for at least 360 families in East Jerusalem. In the Old City of Jerusalem, UNDP rehabilitated more than 17 business centres, improving the economic situation of some 20 families. UN-Habitat finalized the provision of 100 suitable housing units to poor women-headed households and their families in Hebron, including the transfer of title deeds. UNDP continued to advance the construction of the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park through the provision of essential infrastructure services, including water, electricity, buildings and structures, industrial services and telecommunications.

B. United Nations system emergency assistance

59. The United Nations and its partners continued to coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance in the areas of protection, shelter, food security, water and sanitation, health and nutrition and education, reaching some 1.5 million of the 1.6 million vulnerable Palestinians targeted for assistance in 2015. The majority of the needs were in Gaza and included a significant portion of the residual needs from the conflict of 2014, in particular for shelter. The 2015 Strategic Response Plan mobilized $416 million of the $705 million sought (59 per cent).

60. The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan is seeking $571 million, of which about 65 per cent of the requirements are for Gaza. That amount is nearly 20 per cent less than the amount requested in 2015, primarily owing to a reduction in shelter needs as the pace of reconstruction increased. The Plan includes $304 million for the UNRWA Emergency Appeal.

61. The increasing pace of reconstruction notwithstanding, shelter continued to be the primary need, with some 75,000 persons remaining displaced as a result of the damage and destruction of housing stemming from the conflict. As at the end of March 2016, 3,500 of the 18,000 displaced families (19 per cent) had been able to return to homes that had been reconstructed or repaired as a result of cash assistance from United Nations agencies or other international support. The repair and reconstruction of an additional 3,600 homes, or 20 per cent of the caseload, are under way, with many of the homes nearing completion. Funding has been confirmed for some 5,000 families (27 per cent of the caseload) to repair or reconstruct their homes in 2016, leaving a funding gap for nearly 6,000 families (about one third of the caseload).

62. The United Nations Mine Action Service cleared 29 of the 128 sites where it was suspected that aircraft bombs were highly likely to be buried, in order to allow for safe reconstruction to begin.

Emergency food support

63. In Gaza, UNRWA distributed 573,398 food parcels to 146,357 refugee families (more than 800,000 individuals). WFP provided 71,145 food-insecure non-refugees with cash-based transfers and 284,864 non-refugees with in-kind food parcels. Jointly, WFP and UNRWA provided up to 4,800 internally displaced people in shelters until June 2015 with ready-to-eat food assistance. UNICEF and WFP built upon a successful joint e-voucher programme launched after the conflict to continue

to provide emergency food, water, sanitation, hygiene and school uniforms to displaced and other vulnerable families.

64. In the West Bank, WFP assisted 244,000 vulnerable and food-insecure individuals, 105,000 of whom through cash-based transfers and 139,000 through in-kind food distributions. UNRWA and WFP continued their joint in-kind food assistance programme, supporting 34,000 marginalized Bedouin and herders. UNRWA provided cash-based transfers to 47,000 refugees using the WFP voucher platform, for a total value of $4.2 million, spent on fresh food and other staples in local shops.

Emergency income generation

65. In Gaza, the UNRWA job creation programme provided 8,281 jobs, while more than 6,800 direct and indirect jobs were created through UNRWA construction projects. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided emergency cash-for-work support to some 7,000 households (42,120 individuals) in 19 Palestine refugee camps. This provided a cash injection of some $7.6 million to food-insecure households. Owing to a shortage of funds, UNRWA has since 2014 no longer been operating the cash-for-work programme outside the camps, but continues to support non-camp refugees with electronic food vouchers.

66. UNDP continued to support emergency income-generating activities in Gaza, including solid waste primary collection services, which benefited 4,000 workers supporting 20,800 dependants.

Emergency health support

67. Through UNFPA support, 12,676 women were provided with psychosocial support in Gaza and the West Bank. To respond to the psychosocial impact of the conflict in Gaza, UNRWA supported individual counselling sessions, benefiting 13,581 Palestine refugees, and 9,463 group counselling sessions. UNICEF and its implementing partners were able to reach 85,881 children (42,725 girls and 43,156 boys) with psychosocial support, including through individual and group counselling, in Gaza. In the West Bank, the UNRWA emergency health programme supported six mobile health clinics operating in 56 locations with poor access to primary health care. The clinics served some 22,000 individuals and delivered close to 87,400 patient consultations throughout the year. In addition, UNRWA supported 49 Bedouin and herder communities in Area C through mobile community mental health services, providing some 10,500 individuals with monthly access to psychosocial and mental health support. The initiative included vulnerable communities located in military zones, those in close proximity to settlements and those threatened with demolition.

68. WHO procured emergency medical supplies to address shortages, improve service delivery and strengthen emergency preparedness in Gaza. It responded to a seasonal influenza outbreak by mobilizing antiviral treatment and laboratory supplies needed for diagnostic testing. WHO conducted training workshops on emergency risk communication for 30 health workers engaged in school health, community health, health services, environmental health and media communications, as well as providing specialized training on the management of severe acute respiratory infections for 47 front-line clinicians working in intensive care units and emergency rooms of public hospitals.

Emergency water and sanitation support

69. In Gaza, UNICEF supported the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility to conduct repairs and upgrade water and wastewater networks, pumping stations and water wells, in addition to improving water storage capacity through the distribution of drinking and domestic water storage tanks. Through its partners, UNICEF delivered safe drinking water to 73,030 people using tankers. It also continued to improve access to water by supporting the Palestinian Water Authority and the Utility in the construction of a seawater desalination plant in southern Gaza, which is expected to serve 75,000 people.

70. UNRWA supported water and sanitation and health-care providers operating inside and outside the Palestine refugee camps in Gaza with fuel and other supplies to ensure the functioning of wastewater and solid waste management and to reduce the risk of UNRWA water wells being affected by power outages. In addition, UNRWA repaired two water and sanitation installations.

Emergency agriculture support

71. FAO responded to outbreaks of avian influenza by providing in-kind support to the Ministry of Agriculture in Gaza and the West Bank to assess the gaps, obstacles and opportunities with regard to developing national preparedness efforts for future outbreaks.

72. FAO continued to restore access to assets and resources for 4,620 households through the rehabilitation of six wells and 12 damaged greenhouses in Gaza, the distribution of organic fertilizer for 13,000 dunums of land in the West Bank and the repair of 706 animal shelters in Gaza and the West Bank. It improved access to livelihood assets and resources for more than 8,300 farmers, herders and rural households through the rehabilitation and improvement of cisterns for livestock and farming use.

Emergency education support

73. UNICEF, through its partners, supported safe and protected access to children in violence flashpoints such as Hebron, East Jerusalem and Nablus.

74. The United Nations Mine Action Service, UNICEF and UNRWA, along with community-based organizations, worked to ensure that risk education regarding explosive remnants of war was institutionalized in schools throughout Gaza. The Service and UNRWA trained 941 teachers to deliver that risk education. The Service also provided direct risk education to 22,500 beneficiaries.

Emergency housing support

75. In Gaza, the United Nations Mine Action Service conducted 602 risk assessments and properly disposed of more than 235 items of suspected explosive ordnance, enabling UNDP to clear 1 million tons of rubble without any incidents, even though operations were conducted in heavily contaminated areas.

76. The United Nations Office for Project Services continued to operate a materials monitoring unit, in close coordination with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to enable the implementation of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. It facilitated the entry of

more than 1 million tons of construction materials into Gaza. To date, 450 large-scale construction projects have benefited from the use of those materials and more than 100,000 individual beneficiaries have been able to purchase materials to repair their damaged homes.

77. In Gaza, UNRWA disbursed more than $140.6 million, allowing 80,000 families to repair or reconstruct their homes. As part of that assistance package, it distributed monthly transitional shelter cash assistance to close to 9,000 Palestine refugee families whose shelters had been rendered uninhabitable. UNDP also provided $6 million in cash assistance to nearly 4,000 non-refugee families displaced by the conflict, allowing them to have access to temporary shelter while their homes were being reconstructed. UNDP supported the rehabilitation of in excess of 1,200 partially damaged homes housing some 7,200 Palestinians. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided cash assistance to 73 refugee families (some 395 individuals) following home demolitions by the Israeli authorities. It also provided 824 refugee families with cash assistance and referrals following search-and-arrest operations by Israeli security forces, which often led to physical damage to their homes.

C. United Nations system support to Palestinian institutions

78. The United Nations country team established a Gaza reconstruction and recovery coordination group in order to strengthen the coordination of United Nations and non-governmental organization reconstruction and recovery activities and to support the government-led Gaza reconstruction team in the implementation of the detailed needs assessment and recovery framework for Gaza.

79. In Gaza, UN-Habitat supported the Ministry of Public Works and Housing and the municipality of Khuza'ah to review and develop new detailed outline plans for two heavily damaged neighbourhoods and an overall revised master plan in an integrated, participatory manner that included accommodation of key infrastructure, public space, future demographic growth, environmental sustainability and other innovative planning concepts.

80. UNDP and UN-Women provided support to justice and security institutions, including the Ministry of Justice and the High Judicial Council, in mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and planning processes, including in the area of law-making. As part of joint programme efforts to develop specialized justice and security services for women and girls, 19 senior officers of the Palestinian Civil Police concluded an accredited professional diploma course in public administration and gender delivered by Birzeit University.

81. WFP supported the Civil Defence in building capacity in the area of emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction, focusing on information management systems and coordination in emergencies. WFP delivered tools, technical training sessions and simulations on emergency information management to increase the Government's capacity to anticipate and respond to external shocks. Cooperation also included the development of a public awareness tool and an early warning system and the establishment of three emergency operation centres at the governorate level to expand the ability of the Civil Defence to coordinate and respond to large-scale natural disasters.

82. The United Nations Office for Project Services initiated a three-year programme to build the capacity of the Ministry of the Interior in civilian oversight of the State security functions. The Ministry and the 17 Palestinian security entities have re-engineered key processes to reinforce the governance of the Ministry with regard to legal services, strategic planning, human resources, complaints processing and media and public relations. All the re-engineered processes are now linked to civilian oversight mechanisms.

83. UNFPA strengthened the capacity of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in the preparations for the 2017 population census. With UNICEF support, the Central Bureau successfully launched and completed the fifth round of the multiple indicator cluster survey, in time for final reporting on the Millennium Development Goals.

84. ILO supported the establishment of the first social security system for private sector workers and their family members, together with a new social security law based on international labour standards and best practice. The law was endorsed by the Cabinet and thereafter signed by the President, Mahmoud Abbas.

85. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, working with other United Nations agencies, provided technical assistance and training to the Government to implement, monitor and report on the seven core international human rights treaties acceded to in 2014. Its support included a series of thematic workshops on reporting guidelines and technical guidance on workplans for responsible line ministries.

D. Private sector development

86. In Gaza, UNRWA financed 3,678 loans, valued at nearly $5.5 million, to Palestinian businesses and households in 2015. A total of 3,221 loans, valued at nearly $5 million, were provided to Palestine refugees, while 1,490 loans, valued at $1.5 million, were extended to women. In the West Bank, 11,888 loans, valued at $15.6 million, were financed, with Palestine refugees receiving 23 per cent of them ($3.5 million). Women received 38 per cent of the loans (4,454 loans, valued at $4.8 million), and young people between 18 and 30 years of age received 40 per cent (4,725 loans, valued at $5.7 million).

E. Coordination of United Nations assistance

87. Under the auspices of the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process/United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, collaboration and coordination between the numerous donor and United Nations forums were strengthened. The humanitarian country team met regularly to agree on humanitarian advocacy and response measures. With the support of the Coordination Unit within the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations country team continued to coordinate its United Nations Development Action Framework programming, in alignment with the priorities of the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty. Efforts to forge constructive partnerships between the United Nations, the Government and the broader aid community were strengthened. The United Nations continued the preparation of regular Ad Hoc

Liaison Committee reports, strategies and guidance for development and humanitarian work in Gaza, East Jerusalem and Area C and, together with other humanitarian actors, the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan.

IV. Donor response to the crisis

Budgetary and fiscal support

88. The fiscal position of the Government remained fragile. The Government improved its fiscal performance on the revenue and expenditure sides during the year, reducing its recurrent fiscal deficit from 12.5 per cent of GDP in 2014 to an estimated 11.7 per cent in 2015. Direct budget support by donors declined, however, leaving a large financing gap and increasing public debt. According to the International Monetary Fund, direct donor support fell by about a third in 2015 and reached its lowest nominal level since 2008, leaving the Government's budget in an increasingly precarious position.

Donor coordination

89. The Coordination Unit within the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process supported the United Nations system and prepared substantive contributions for various forums, such as the twice-yearly meetings of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. The Unit also coordinated policy positions and addressed impediments to the implementation of programmes with key donors and outside actors.

90. United Nations agencies continued to support the Government in the development of a national policy agenda for the period 2017-2022, which would outline development priorities and be complemented by sector strategies.

91. The local aid coordination structure continued to serve as a key forum for donors and the State of Palestine. The coordination of humanitarian assistance and advocacy continued to be led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

92. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee met once during the reporting period, on 30 September 2015 in New York.

V. Unmet needs

93. Of the $5.4 billion pledged in Cairo for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza in October 2014, some 39 per cent has been disbursed. However, only $17 million has gone towards financing the productive sector needs identified in the detailed needs assessment and recovery framework for Gaza (less than 3 per cent of the $602 million needed).

94. Given the continued humanitarian needs, the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan is requesting $571 million, of which $304 million is also included in the UNRWA Emergency Appeal. To date, only 15 per cent has been raised. In addition to the needs identified in the Plan, UNRWA is seeking an additional $99 million (for a total Emergency Appeal for 2016 of $405 million) to meet shelter, social safety net and other needs in Gaza, as well as provide food assistance and cash-for-work

programmes in the West Bank. Additional support is also urgently needed for the UNRWA core budget, which faces a predicted shortfall of $81 million in 2016.

95. United Nations agencies are seeking $2.15 billion to support development programming in the context of the United Nations Development Action Framework, of which 60 per cent has been funded to date.

VI. Challenges

96. The operating environment remained challenging, owing largely to restrictions on access and movement, including the closures in Gaza. Humanitarian space and the ability of United Nations organizations and partners to deliver timely assistance were limited at times by physical barriers such as checkpoints, a restrictive permit policy for humanitarian personnel and restrictions on the import of materials into Gaza.

97. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, restrictions on movement and access, demolitions of Palestinian infrastructure and the associated displacement of Palestinians all increased. Furthermore, significant settlement activity continued to take place, contributing to an escalation of tensions on the ground. While not directly targeted in the context of the increased violence that began in October 2015, United Nations personnel and dependants became more exposed to risk. United Nations movements were affected by increased closures and search operations at checkpoints and locations of security incidents, including improvised checkpoints set up by the Israeli security forces in East Jerusalem in October 2015.

98. United Nations agencies focused in particular on the reconstruction and recovery of Gaza. While the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism is functioning, reconstruction in several sectors is occurring at a slower pace owing to the lack of financing. The lack of progress on intra-Palestinian reconciliation, including civil service reform — an important condition for donor support for the reconstruction of Gaza emphasized at the conference held in Cairo in October 2014 — has also generated its own set of challenges in Gaza.

VII. Conclusions

99. The operational context for the work of the United Nations during the reporting period was increasingly challenging owing to the enormous task of supporting the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza following the conflict of 2014, in addition to the continued threats to the livelihoods of Palestinians, especially demolitions, and the ongoing restrictions, which posed formidable obstacles to development. The United Nations will continue to work towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the establishment of a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with a secure Israel.